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Amendments To The Claims

In the Claims:

Amend claims 1 and 3

Cancel claim 2.

Add new claims 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28.

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1. (Currently amended) A process for preventing food-borne illness comprising the step of heating a surface of a food product in a manner effective for achieving at least a 3 log reduction in live bacteria on said surface without causing any substantial color change in said surface, wherein said food product has an internal core temperature and wherein said step of heating is conducted in a manner such that no substantial increase in said internal core temperature occurs.
2. (Canceled)
3. (Currently amended) The process of claim 1 2 wherein said internal core temperature is not greater than 40°F.
4. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein, in said step of heating, said surface is heated to a temperature of at least 160°F.

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5. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein, in said step of heating, said food product is continuously delivered through an oven.
6. (Original) The process of claim 5 wherein said oven is an infrared oven.
7. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein said food product has been cooked prior to said step of heating.
8. (Original) The process of claim 7 wherein said food product is selected from the group consisting of meat, poultry, and fish products.
9. (Original) The process of claim 1 further comprising the step of packaging said food product within less than 10 minutes after said step of heating.
10. (Original) A process for preventing food-borne illness comprising the step of heating a surface of a food product to a temperature of at least 160°F, said food product having an internal core temperature and said step of heating being conducted in a manner such that no substantial increase in said core temperature occurs.

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11. (Original) The process of claim 10 wherein said step of heating is conducted in a manner effective for preventing any substantial change in color of said surface.
12. (Original) The process of claim 10 wherein said core temperature is not greater than 40°F.
13. (Original) The process of claim 10 wherein, in said step of heating, said food product is continuously delivered through an oven.
14. (Original) The process of claim 13 wherein said oven is an infrared oven.
15. The process of claim 10 wherein said food product has been cooked prior to said step of heating.
16. (Original) The process of claim 15 wherein said food product is selected from the group consisting of meat, poultry, and fish products.
17. (Original) The process of claim 10 further comprising the step of packaging said food product within less than 10 minutes after said step of heating.
18. (Original) A process for preventing food-borne illness comprising the steps of:

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(a) continuously conveying a precooked food product through a continuous infrared oven at an operating temperature of at least 500°F and
(b) heating a surface of said precooked food product in said infrared oven for a time sufficient to bring said surface to a temperature of at least 160°F,
wherein said precooked food product is selected from the group consisting of meat, poultry, and fish products.

19. (Original) The process of claim 18 wherein said operating temperature is at least 700°F and said time is less than two minutes.

20. (Original) The process of claim 18 wherein said operating temperature is at least 750°F and said time is less than one minute.

21. (Original) The process of claim 18 wherein, in step (b), said surface is heated to at least 180°F.

22. (Original) The process of claim 18 further comprising the step of (c) continuously packaging said food product within less than 10 minutes after step (b).

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23. (New) A process for preventing food-borne illness comprising the step of heating a surface of a food product in a manner effective for achieving at least a 3 log reduction in live bacteria on said surface without causing any substantial color change in said surface, wherein in said step of heating, said food product is continuously delivered through an infrared oven.
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24. (New) A process for preventing food-borne illness comprising the step of heating a surface of a food product in a manner effective for achieving at least a 3 log reduction in live bacteria on said surface without causing any substantial color change in said surface, wherein said food product has been cooked prior to said step of heating.
25. (New) The process of claim 24 wherein said food product is selected from the group consisting of meat, poultry, and fish products.
26. (New) A process for preventing food-borne illness comprising the step of heating a surface of a food product in a manner effective for achieving at least a 3 log reduction in live bacteria on said surface without causing any substantial color change in said surface.
27. (New) The process of claim 26 wherein, in said step of heating, said surface is heated to a temperature of at least 160°F.

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28. (New) The process of claim 26 further comprising the step of packaging said food product
within less than 10 minutes after said step of heating.